



The De-Stress Press

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The Western New York Stress Reduction Program Newsletter

3359 Broadway, Cheektowaga, NY 14227

Working together, ordinary people can perform extraordinary feats. They can lift things...toward the heights of excellence. ~Author Unknown~

**WESTERN NEW YORK STRESS
REDUCTION TEAM WORKGROUP:
MAKING CHANGES TO BETTER
RESPOND TO THE EMERGENCY
SERVICES COMMUNITY**



The surveyor credited with finding the nine trapped coal miners in 2002, killed himself in June 2003. An Oklahoma City police sergeant who rescued four bombing victims in 1995 committed suicide the following year. The paramedic who played a crucial role in saving baby Jessica McClure from a Texas well shaft in 1987 took his life nearly eight years later. These are just a few of the tragedies that have resulted after some of the most significant and heroic rescue moments of our time.

The Western New York Stress Reduction Program is a group of specially trained peer and mental health volunteers who are dedicated to providing critical incident stress management services to emergency services personnel in Erie, Wyoming, and Niagara counties 24/7/365. The team, which was established in 1988, incorporated in 1989, has provided countless services to men and women in uniform following exposure to a critical incident. A critical incident is defined as an event that is outside the range of a normal human experience. The events described above certainly fit this description. In addition to large-scale events, other examples of critical incidents include the line of duty death or the suicide of a co-worker, the death of an infant or child, a multiple casualty or fatality event, or a horrific fire. Critical incident stress is different from everyday stress because it is usually sudden and unexpected, with a potential to overwhelm an individual's coping mechanisms. These types of significant events also affect a person's ability to process sensory information that occurred during the incident. Critical Incident Stress Management is a comprehensive system of interventions designed to assist individuals and groups in mitigating stress symptoms, and facilitate a return to pre-incident levels of functioning.

Fast Facts

- ❖ 90% of adults in the U.S. will be exposed to a traumatic event in their lifetime
- ❖ Heart attacks claim the lives of firefighters more frequently than any other line-of-duty injury
- ❖ Suicide is the leading cause of death for police officers
- ❖ Rates of divorce, substance abuse and heart attacks are highest in emergency service professions

One of the goals of the Western New York Stress Reduction Program is to provide pre-incident education programs to emergency services personnel. The objectives of this program are to teach participants about stress, stress reactions, the relationship between emergency services work and stress, what can happen if we don't take care of ourselves, and to provide information on the variety of CISM interventions and how the Stress Reduction Team can help. We have taken our show on the road to the front line men and women who protect our communities. From September through December 2004, nine pre-incident education programs have been delivered to over 138 participants. We are looking forward to working with more departments as we start the new year.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The WNY Stress Reduction Program is a strong and active team of volunteers dedicated to helping the helper. In 2004, we conducted 57 CISM interventions providing assistance to 349 emergency services personnel. Public Safety work is tough, and it is an honor for our group to serve those who tirelessly serve our communities. I extend my appreciation to all participating agencies in Erie, Wyoming and Niagara Counties for the support they have shown their personnel and for their acknowledgment of the benefits of CISM and the Stress Reduction Program. Stay safe out there and when you need help, call us – we'll be there.

~ Michael Walters, Executive Director ~

Stress Management Tips

- ❖ Set realistic goals
- ❖ Practice random acts of kindness
- ❖ Learn to say NO
- ❖ Live simply
- ❖ Exercise and maintain a healthy diet
- ❖ Avoid living on the edge: Be safe

How to Contact the Team:

Information & Education: 716-681-6070

Immediate Assistance:

Erie County: 716-898-3696

Wyoming County: 585-786-8867

Niagara County: 716-433-4482

Website: www.erie.gov/depts/wnystress

Email: wnystress@yahoo.com



Additional Websites:

CDC: www.cdc.gov

FEMA: www.fema.gov

ICISF: www.icisf.org

U.S. Fire Administration: www.usfa.fema.gov

Trauma Response publication: www.aets.org/trresp.htm

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: www.dhs.gov/dhspublic

Training Opportunities

- ❖ April 2-3, 2005: *Line of Duty Death Pre-Planning Workshop*. Sponsored by the New York State Fire Academy, Montour Falls, NY. For more information, please call 607-535-7136 x600.
- ❖ April 5-6, 2005 (8:30a.m.-4:30p.m. both days): *CISM: Individual Crisis Intervention & Peer Support*. Location: Erie County Emergency Services Training & Operations Center, 3359 Broadway, Cheektowaga, NY 14227. Seating is limited. To register contact Jay Swarthout at JaySwarthout@yahoo.com